

over four decades, and his regime does not permit free speech or free enterprise. What is particularly reprehensible is the treatment Castro doles out to those who desire freedom on the island.

This week, the EU will present its Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to the Ladies in White, the mothers and wives of Cuban political prisoners who hold peaceful demonstrations each Sunday to protest the imprisonment of their husbands and sons, some for more than 20 years, for political reasons. I extend my congratulations to these worthy award recipients and to the Sakharov Prize selection committee for their continuing attention to Cuba.

Three years ago, the same prize was awarded to Oswaldo Payá, organizer of the Varela Project, which seeks a referendum on open elections, freedom of speech, freedom for political prisoners, and free enterprise. Despite the imprisonment of more than 50 organizers and continuous government harassment, the Varela Project continues to gather more signatures. To date, more than 35,000 ordinary Cubans have signed the petition at great personal risk and joined a historic national grassroots movement. Mr. Payá also continues to work with other dissidents to plan for Cuba's transition to democracy. I have met with Mr. Payá and found him to be an extraordinary individual.

All this is happening in a context of increasing demands for freedom by the Cuban people. This year's edition of the report entitled "Steps to Freedom" by the Miami-based Directorio chronicled 1,805 acts of nonviolent civil protest and 1,371 vigils for the freedom of political prisoners throughout Cuba, including one major conference on May 20. This represents a significant increase since the first such report in 1997, which found only 44 acts of civil protest, all of which were limited to Havana only. The increasing courage of the Cuban people to stand up for their human rights is all the more remarkable since it is happening in the midst of continuing arrests and "actos de repudio" organized by the Castro government.

In 2003, I traveled to Cuba with an open mind about U.S. trade and travel policy. During my trip I was touched by the stories I heard of people imprisoned for such "crimes" as opening a library, belonging to an independent trade union, or being members of Doctors Without Borders. Since that trip, I have come to believe that supporting those who are working for freedom is the single most important policy we can espouse toward Cuba.

Democracy in Cuba is not something the United States can or should impose. What we can do is support the efforts of the Cuban people to achieve their God-given right to live in a free society. On this Human Rights Day, I salute the Ladies in White, Mr. Payá, and all the other Cubans working for human rights and freedom in their country.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today, on World AIDS Day, to remember the 20 million people who have died as a result of the largest pandemic in human history and with the hope that the 40 million people worldwide who are currently living in the shadow of this devastating illness will not be added to the list of lives lost.

The human immunodeficiency virus, HIV, is a certain and silent killer, decimating entire generations, crippling continents, and orphaning as many children as the populations of Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City combined.

While scientific advances promise new hope for so many, we are still far from winning the war on this deadly virus much more must be done.

AIDS was first identified in the United States in Los Angeles in 1981.

In that year, as mayor of San Francisco, I allocated \$180,000 for the treatment of this disease. By the time I left the mayor's office in 1988, funds allocated for AIDS programs in San Francisco had grown to over \$20 million, more than that of the Federal Government. At that time, the crisis had exploded. AIDS cases reported in the United States had ballooned exponentially from 189 in 1981 to a staggering 32,311.

Today, there are over 1 million Americans living with HIV, and the damage this disease continues to inflict across the globe is shocking.

Worldwide, some 40 million people are living with HIV; 95 percent of those 40 million reside in developing nations. Tragically, only 12 percent of those infected are able to access the antiretroviral drugs needed to significantly extend and improve the quality of their lives.

It costs an estimated \$300 per person per year to purchase the drugs to treat someone with HIV in the developing world, which is less than one dollar per day. As Americans, it is imperative that we acknowledge the AIDS crisis and its causes both globally and locally but our current efforts are simply not enough.

Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, accounts for only 10 percent of the global population but is home to 60 to 70 percent of the world's reported cases of HIV. Those infected in the region comprise some 25 million of the 40 million people worldwide stricken with the disease.

In Botswana, a staggering 39 percent of the entire population is HIV positive, and the average life expectancy for a baby born in 2010 will be 27 years a figure not seen since the end of the 19th century.

Although some countries have been remarkably proactive in preventing the spread of the virus, HIV remains rampant in others. In most countries, women are disproportionately affected by HIV, in some African nations outnumbering men by more than a 3 to 1 margin.

Sadly, our plight in America continues as well. New advances in antiretroviral drugs show promise in helping many, but AIDS remains an incurable, fatal disease. Especially disconcerting in this country are the disproportionate numbers of minorities and gay men contracting HIV.

African-American women comprise some 72 percent all women diagnosed with HIV in the United States. While African Americans make up only 12 percent of the American population, they account for about 40 percent of AIDS cases diagnosed since the pandemic began.

Perhaps most disturbing, a recent study revealed that 46 percent of Black gay men tested were HIV positive, and of those tested, two-thirds were unaware of their status.

In my home State of California, 45 percent of Los Angeles nursing homes reported that they would not provide treatment for an HIV-positive patient, and one-third of the city's OBGYNs would refuse to treat a mother with HIV.

As a Senator representing the State with the second-highest cumulative number of persons living with AIDS in the United States, I have taken a proactive approach to securing funding for those who so desperately need help battling this disease by consistently supporting increased funding and reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act.

I have been a cosponsor of the Early Treatment for HIV Act since the 107th Congress, legislation that would ensure low-income HIV patients receive access to antiretroviral drugs from Medicaid before their immune systems are crippled by the disease.

Additionally, I have been a cosponsor of the Microbicide Development Act since the 107th Congress, a bill to expand, intensify, and coordinate research and development of microbicides to prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Today's prevention options such as condoms and mutual monogamy are not feasible for millions of people around the world, especially women. Many women lack the social or economic power to insist their partners use condoms. Microbicides are user-controlled products in the form of gels, creams, or films that kill or inactivate the bacteria and viruses that cause HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and their use empowers women to protect themselves from contracting this disease.

To combat AIDS in the developing world, I cosponsored the Kennedy-Feinstein-Feingold Amendment to Help Fight HIV/AIDS, urging developing countries to use compulsory licensing to greatly increase the amount of safe, generic drugs made available to HIV/AIDS patients.

I also authored an amendment to strike language requiring that one-third of funding from the President's Global HIV/AIDS initiative go to "abstinence until marriage" programs to

ensure that our prevention dollars use the comprehensive "ABC" approach, Abstinence, Be Faithful, use Condoms to prevent the spread of HIV.

In the 24 years since AIDS was first diagnosed, America and the world have made tremendous strides in battling HIV. The average life expectancy of someone infected with HIV has risen dramatically since the disease was first identified. Despite our best efforts, the war on AIDS is still not won. Even the most optimistic estimates predict a vaccine may be another 10 years away. As Americans, we must do everything in our power to expedite the defeat of this disease.

I urge my fellow senators and the Bush administration to do everything in their power to find a cure for the AIDS pandemic and adequately fund research and treatment of HIV/AIDS. While our efforts have been great, the toll AIDS has taken on the world has been far greater.

It is my hope that our unwavering dedication to helping the countless victims of HIV/AIDS will continue well beyond World AIDS Day. It should be our goal to band together to work to find the cure for this deadly illness which transcends gender, race, and nationality.

On this day, I encourage people around the world to take time to ponder the vast scope of the AIDS pandemic, and remember those we have lost. But let us not remember them in sorrow but, rather, let their memory inspire our efforts to prevent any further devastation from this virus. Amidst our many domestic and international problems, let us remember that AIDS has cruelly cut short tens of millions of lives, more than that of any warlord, dictator, or natural disaster in human history. This disease has ravaged a continent, orphaned innumerable children, and torn apart entire communities. Millions more will die of AIDS this year, and millions more, including newborn infants, will become infected. Until the day when this virus no longer threatens the lives of millions of innocent people, we all must pledge to keep this fight alive.

It is our responsibility as representatives of the people to take action now to eradicate this deadly disease. Each day we wait is another day when someone's loved one will fall victim to this virus. Silence is approval, and it is our duty to raise our voices for those whose voices have been silenced. It is our duty to further the strides taken since the first case was diagnosed in 1981, so our generation can celebrate the day when the last case is cured. As I have said before, "I was there in the beginning, and I plan to be there in the end."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE COMMUNITY HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHEAST INDIANA

• Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable organization in my home State, the Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana. Each night, nearly 600,000 Hoosiers go to bed hungry, including 190,000 children. The numbers are heartbreaking, particularly during the holiday season, but thanks to the Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana, our State is making strides to end this terrible tragedy.

The Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana has been a leader in the efforts to eliminate hunger across Indiana. Each year, Community Harvest collects and distributes more than 7 million pounds of donated surplus food through a network of more than 550 social service agencies. Each of these agencies offers invaluable assistance to hungry children, the working poor, and the elderly and helps ensure that every Hoosier has access to a healthy meal. Recently, the organization was named the 2005 Food Bank of the Year by America's Second Harvest—an honor never before awarded to an Indiana food bank. This award recognizes the hard work, dedication, energy, and efficiency of the organization, as well as its inspired leadership under Jane Avery.

With Jane at the helm, Community Harvest has achieved organizational excellence, while continuing to do God's work, making sure that all our neighbors are cared for and fed. One of the lessons I learned from my parents was that life is not about what you take out of it, but what you put back in. Jane lives that sentiment to the fullest every day. Her work has made Indiana a better place to live for all of us.

This year has been particularly hard on many Hoosier families and communities, making the work of Community Harvest especially critical. Businesses across the State have suffered layoffs, and families have lost their homes in recent tornados and storms, all while gas and heating prices have continued to increase. The Community Harvest Food Bank allows families to stretch their budget further, so they don't have to face the impossible decision of choosing between paying bills and putting food on the table. Each week, between 50,000 and 54,000 children and adults in 9 counties in Indiana are able to sit down to a hot meal because of Community Harvest's work.

It is part of the fabric of life in Indiana that we all look out for our neighbors, aiding them through tough times and celebrating in good times. The Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana is the kind of organization that keeps the Hoosier tradition of compassion alive and makes me proud to be a Hoosier.

It is my great honor to recognize Jane Avery and the Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana for their service to the State of Indiana.●

CONGRATULATING MASON CORINTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I rise to congratulate Mason Corinth Elementary School of Williamstown, KY. Mason Corinth Elementary School is recognized as the recipient of the Fitness for Life Around Grant County, FFLAG, Silver Award for the Worksite Wellness Program.

FFLAG was created in 2002 to raise awareness about physical activity and proper nutrition. In September of 2005, FFLAG expanded their program to focus on worksite wellness by inviting Grant County businesses and organizations to take part in the Workplace Wellness Program. The program focused on budget allocation for worksite wellness programs, employees' personal dedication to fitness, communication about wellness in the workplace, and on environmental changes that can help make our offices, stores, schools, and factories healthier places to work. I am proud to say that Mason Corinth School is one of the worthy recipients of the Silver Award.

Sadly, the State of Kentucky is suffering from a health epidemic. Over two-thirds of adults in our State suffer from obesity. And this epidemic is not only hurting our waistlines, but also our pocketbooks. In 2003, over \$1.1 billion was spent by Kentuckians on health problems caused by obesity. That is why programs which promote healthy living, such as FFLAG, are so important for the future of our Commonwealth.

Mason Corinth Elementary School is a shining example of how our Kentucky schools can help Kentuckians lead better, healthier lives.

I congratulate Mason Corinth Elementary School on this achievement. The administrators, teachers, parents, and students of this school are an inspiration to the citizens of Kentucky. I look forward to all that Mason Corinth Elementary School accomplishes in the future.●

CONGRATULATING CRITTENDEN-MOUNT ZION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I rise to congratulate Crittenden-Mount Zion Elementary School of Dry Ridge, KY. Crittenden-Mount Zion Elementary School is recognized as the recipient of the Fitness for Life Around Grant County, FFLAG, Silver Award for the Worksite Wellness Program.

FFLAG was created in 2002 to raise awareness about physical activity and proper nutrition. In September of 2005, FFLAG expanded their program to focus on worksite wellness by inviting Grant County businesses and organizations to take part in the Workplace